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ETHICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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“The storyteller is the figure in which the righteous man encounters himself (Walter Benjamin)”

INTRODUCTION

We develop an ethical approach to the question of reconfiguring higher education towards sustainable education. We are not thinking about developing categorical imperatives (formal ethics) about sustainability or developing particular theoretic positions on ethics (for example utilitarian or practical ethics) in regard to sustainability (Content-Sense Ethics) (e.g. Boje, 2008a, pp. 4-5). As such we are not looking for a universal answer in regard to what sustainability is and what it is not.

We believe instead that the question of sustainability is way too complex to be captured in universal approaches. Instead we suggest a more dynamic approach. More specifically we seek to develop a particular critical or reflexive ethics that we refer to as storytelling ethics (Boje, 2008b; Jørgensen & Boje, 2010).

We define storytelling ethics as the critical reflexive inquiry into how our language and actions affect others with the intention of creating relationships that are more sustainable. Storytelling ethics is derived from an ontological understanding of being as living stories that are dialogical, plural, emerging and unresolved (Jørgensen & Boje, 2009; Jørgensen et al., 2010). Stories evolve interactively with others in particular time/space relationships.

Story implies the recognition of otherness and more specifically how we are continuously complicit in producing un-ethics and injustice. In this way, storytelling ethics appeals to our senses of humanism and responsibility by creating an awareness of the other and the others. As noted by Boje, storytelling ethics does not ignore other forms of ethics; e.g. formal and content-sense ethics (Boje, 2008a, p. 5). It seeks to create a more democratic relationship between the voices embedded in such ethical and the voices embedded in the multiple voices of here and now.

Storytelling ethics in higher education implies continuous organizational development, staff development and pedagogical development in learning to balance requirements for sustainability with other complex concerns. Storytelling ethics is therefore a strategy for organizational learning.

We organize the paper around three moves.

First, we deal with sustainability and provide some considerations of how it is linked to ethics in higher education. Second, we develop a storytelling ethics. This includes making a distinction between narrative and storytelling. Storytelling ethics, it is argued, is the creative interplay between narrative ethics and living stories. Thirdly, we summarize the discussion by clarifying some principles of storytelling ethics and applying them into a strategy of organizational learning in higher education.

ETHICS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

We conceive moral responsibilities as our duties and obligations to other people (Haslebo & Haslebo, 2007, pp. 24-25). Morality comprises of what we ought to do and what we ought not to do in relation to other people. Morality mirrors our values since values comprise what is important and valuable for us. They determine what we like and dislike. Values create meaning in life and they constitute our point of direction (Henriksen, Nørreklit, Jørgensen, Christensen, & O'Donnell, 2004, p. 111).

Ethics is concerned with the philosophical reflections on morality. Ethics is concerned with two basic questions. One is concerned with prescribing the content of morality. The other is concerned with giving reasons for morality (Haslebo et al., 2007, p. 25). Both ethics and morality are concerned with how we position ourselves in relation to others.

Ethics is linked to sustainability through the concern for the other and subsequent considerations about how to organize relationships to the other. Sustainability is not the same as ethics and morality. Rather sustainability is a description of a particular ethical position amongst other positions, even if the position of sustainability is vaguely defined and disputed. This implies that organizations and professionals that claim to be ethical do not necessarily act in a sustainable way. At times ethics may even seem far removed from sustainability. By developing a storytelling ethics, we hope to bring ethics and sustainability closer together.

In education, the relationship to the other has been a key concern in dominant philosophical perspectives. Dewey and Freire, for example, argued for a close relationship between education, emancipation and the concern for the other (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1996). Dewey argued that the concern for the other was one of the prime reasons why democratic societies would have stronger interests in education. More specifically, he argued that democracy is primarily “a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 1916). Democracy is characterized by a widening of the area of shared concerns and that we always have to take into account the other. For Dewey this involved breaking down barriers of class, race and national territory.

In this sense ethical positions in education stand in sharp contrast to dominant economic ideologies in society, which seem to rest on opposing principles; liberalism, market forces, competition, consumption and growth. According to MacDonald, this system remains an economic enterprise and it rests on the idea of the rational meaning of being “...defined by its logic of circularity and its refusal of any expenditure without return” (MacDonald, 2005, p. 184).

Thus, dominant economic ideologies in some sense preclude otherness and emphasize instead individual self-interest; a system concerned with the exploitation rather than the concern for the other. We make this argument to highlight the formidable task of embedding sustainability in the

ethics of higher education as well as in other organizations and institutions. Learning to balance sustainability with other often conflicting and paradoxical means and ends constitutes the biggest challenge for higher education as well as other organizations and institutions. We follow UNESCO's official description of sustainable development.

"Sustainable development is seeking to meet the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations. We have to learn our way out of current social and environmental problems and learn to live sustainably. Sustainable development is a vision of development that encompasses populations, animal and plant species, ecosystems, natural resources and that integrates concerns such as the fight against poverty, gender equality, human rights, education for all, health, human security, intercultural dialogue, etc." (UNESCO, 2010).

Sustainability expands Dewey's concern for the other in referring to both people and nature. It has big social, technological and environmental implications. A realistic strategy of sustainable development has to evolve in interaction with the practical matters of the world with all its complexity, pluralism, uncertainty, contradictions and value conflicts (Dewey, 1916; Schön, 1983). Higher education plays a key role in this respect. It is a major factor in conducting research for working to obtain sustainability and it is major factor in educating for sustainability.

Higher education's contribution to society is advanced knowledge; knowledge which may have major economic, technological, biological and social impact. Professionals like lawyers, nurses, professions within medicine, teachers, social workers, psychologists, organizational consultants, business leaders and managers, public administrators, engineers etc. face difficult ethical issues in their daily work.

Ethics is therefore critical for higher education and is becoming an integrated part of the curriculum for a growing number of students (Illingworth, 2004). According to Illingworth a growing number of professions have codes of ethics that seek to regulate behavior. How higher education positions itself in relation to society is thus important. It includes considerations about higher education's *raison d'être*; what is being researched and taught including how it is being researched and taught.

What kind of ethics is then needed in higher education? As noted, Boje distinguishes between three kinds of ethics. First, there is formal ethics. This consists in defining categorical imperatives that serve as guidelines for actions in organizations. These imperatives seek to define the right things to do in organizations in all situations. Content-sense ethics grounds ethics in theoretic disciplines where the ethical "ought to do" is tacked from the theory/concept. In other words, "ought" is tacked from outside the situation in which people participate. As such, it has the same universal effect as formal ethics.

We believe that ethics in higher education has been dominated by formal ethics and content-sense ethics. They describe the moral responsibilities and obligations that institutions within higher education have towards their stakeholders. These moral responsibilities are embedded in the law, in codes of conduct, in mission and visions statements in strategies and official policies.

The last kind of ethics is critical ethics of answerability (Boje, 2008a, p. 5). It does not ignore formal or content-sense ethics but adds a significant criterion to these kinds of ethics in emphasizing participants' answerability by referring to their complicity as citizens, consumers, producers, owners, critics, teachers, researchers leaders etc. Our problem with formal ethics and content-sense ethics is exactly the way in which responsibility and answerability becomes removed

from participants and embedded in decontextual systems. By being answerable, participants are instead compelled to change systems producing ethical problems.

Storytelling ethics is one kind of critical answerability ethics, while we argue that formal ethics and content-sense ethics is of a narrative ethics (see distinction below between storytelling ethics and narrative ethics). The criterion added to ethics is derived from being in the situation and listening to multiple voices of the situation. It is distinct from formal ethics and content-sense ethics by emphasizing what Morson calls “the presentness of the present” (Morson, 1994).

He makes this point by comparing with a notion of time called “foreshadowing,” which accordingly robs its present of its presentness” (Morson, 1994, p. 117). In foreshadowing, the future is already presumed given as the specific outcome of a linear sequence of events. Foreshadowing is consistent with formal ethics and content-sense ethics in the sense, that for examples strategies, decisions and actions in higher education were made with reference to a formal set of principles or a theoretic discourse. Foreshadowing thus precludes “otherness” and thus risks turning into a narcissistic, self-referential and dogmatic truth and justice claim with little sense of concrete circumstances and real life.

Storytelling ethics is thus of critical importance in giving formal imperatives and theoretic discourses more dynamics and in embedding sustainability in real life. We see this critical dance between narrative voices and living stories as one of major potential for continuously moving towards sustainability and raising the stakes in sustainability.

Next we will begin developing a storytelling ethics. This includes making a distinction between narrative and living stories. We then develop a storytelling ethics as the creative interplay between narrative and living stories.

NARRATIVE

Formal and content-sense ethics dominates the ways in which relations to the other are organized. They can be compared with narrative ethics because they presume that time is ordered in a linear sequence of beginning, middle and end. Implicitly they presume imagined causal relationships between actions and consequences, which have been frozen in formal categories or in theoretic discourses guiding strategies, actions and decisions in higher education.

These formal principles or theoretic discourses are the results of what higher education organization have learned from the past in the sense of how the organization has interpreted what has happened in the past and what consequences it has had. They also contain imagined relationships of what the organization stands for and interpretations of linkages between present actions and future consequences. Narrative ethics is thus based on a notion of narrative rationality (e.g. Czarniawska, 1997, p. 22).

Formal ethics and content-sense ethics are the results of learning because learning is centered on how the relationships between actions and consequences are interpreted in order to guide action in the future. Clandinin and Connelly follow Dewey and argue that one criterion of experience is continuity in the sense that experience grows out of other experiences and lead to other experiences: “Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum – the imagined now, some imagined past, or

some imagined future – each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2).

Narrative ethics is as such a reflective practice, where actions are qualified with reference to formal theoretical or scientific knowledge (e.g. Jørgensen, 2010; Schön, 1983). Reflective practice is distinct from practice in the sense that there is a difference whether one acts by rule of thumb or from habit or whether one is capable of arguing why she acts the way, she does. Reflective practice is characterized as the latter. Narrative ethics in higher education is thus to act according to particular narratives of how higher education should position itself in regard to society.

The problem of narrative ethics is the ways in which it seeks to freeze time in a linear relationship of beginning, middle and end (Boje & Durant, 2006). It works with a notion of time called foreshadowing, which as noted before robs the present of its presentness by lifting the veil on a predetermined future” (Morson, 1994, p. 117). Robbing the present of its presentness may imply relying on simple explanations, myths, prejudice and habit without allowing for a deeper interrogation into multiple possible directions.

To be more specific, interrogation is not continuous in narrative ethics but always goes before formal categories and theoretic discourse. Dewey argues for example that the source of learning is a disturbance in our notion of time – that is the perceived relationships between actions and consequences. This is for Dewey an experience of a problem defined as the experience of a new bothersome and doubtful situation.

For him, learning involves reflection where the function is “...to bring about a new situation in which the difficulty is resolved, the confusion cleared away, the trouble smoothed out, the question it puts answered. Any particular process of thinking naturally comes to its close when the situation before the mind is settled, decided, orderly, clear, for then there is nothing to call out reflection until a new bothersome or doubtful situation arises” (Dewey, 1991, p. 100).

Further, he argues that “...inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole” (Dewey 1991, p. 108). The object of learning in Dewey’s work is thus narrative in terms of creating certainty, coherence, unity, and identify cause-effect linkages between action and consequences. Interrogation into other possibilities is only temporal and provisional until the “truth” has been embedded in formal categories and theoretic discourses.

We suggest with storytelling ethics a more complex notion of learning, where a more appropriate balance between narrative and storytelling voices is obtained in order that order and interrogation can exist side by side in higher education. We feel this is more appropriate given the importance and complexity of the problem of sustainability and in the context of continuous change and increasing complexity due to globalization (e.g. Bauman, 2004).

The problems of narrative ethics are three-fold. Firstly, narrative implicitly presumes a simplistic view of the relationship between actions and consequences. Narrative is a reduction of complexity into a simple linear relationship of past, present and future.

Secondly there is the problem that narrative is relatively mono-vocal instead of poly-vocal and therefore it tends only to represent a few dominant voices. This means that ethical standards are often written by one expert or a dominant coalition of stakeholders (Boje, 2008c, p. 99). Ethical standards are, in any case, narratives of power. And these relations of power also interfered in the “interrogation” process in which these ethical standards were written.

This obviously constitutes a problem because language is not mono-vocal but is instead characterized as complex and plural (Arendt, 1998, pp. 184-185; Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 271-272; Shotter, 2005). Higher education like other organizations comprises multiple voices; e.g. dominant, oppressed, anonymous and marginalized voices. When narrative ethics dominate only a few voices are represented and embedded in ethical standards. In other words, narrative ethics may be inconsistent and opposed to the identities of many of the stakeholders.

This relates to the third problem of narrative ethics, namely that in time narratives tend to evolve into relatively narcissistic and self-preserving truth claims. This is a problem of any language and be described as being caught up in “...definitive language and truth claims” (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005, p. 227).

Next we begin developing a more complex notion of being that we capture in the notion storytelling. This leads to storytelling ethics as an alternative to narrative ethics.

STORYTELLING

Storytelling ethics emphasizes living story instead of narrative. Living story restores presentness to the present by emphasizing that the here and now has a local identity that is independent of narrative linearity (e.g. Jørgensen, 2002). It is in this sense that the moment is created by living stories that create a joint storytelling that may evolve in many different directions.

The notion of living story follows from Derrida’s notion of story, which according to him has no borderlines. Story is at once larger and smaller than itself, entangled in a play with other stories, becomes part of the other, makes the other part of itself etc. And story is utterly different from its homonym, narrative (Derrida, 2004, p. 82).

Language at any time contains multiple voices and stories (voices of institutions, governments, professional communities, voices of men and women, of generations, of cultures, dialects etc.) and it through their complex interplay that reality is constructed. Living story implies that construction of reality has been influenced and is influenced by a multiplicity of force relations (e.g. Foucault, 1993).

Plurality and many different voices are present in living stories and actions are thus affected by innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, which is why action never achieves its purpose. Nobody is the sole author or producer of her own life story (Arendt, 1998, pp. 184-185). Construction of reality is thus contingent on specific time/place relations that include ethical dimensions, material conditions, actors, interests and intentions. Storytelling ethics is thus founded on the idea that human experience is always inter-subjective and dialogical, plural, ambiguous, open-ended, and emergent and continuously evolving (e.g. Jørgensen, 2010).

A storytelling approach to higher education in other words means seeing higher education as results of complex chains of interactions, negotiations and struggles between many different actors, groups, departments, other organizations, institutions etc. Higher education is not characterized by unity but multiplicity. It is inter-subjectively constructed and it progresses in unpredictable and irrational ways.

As such storytelling works with a notion of open time. Morson uses the term sideshadowing as a way of understanding and working with multiple possibilities (Morson, 1994, p. 117). Sideshadowing conveys the sense that actual events might not have happened. There are always alternatives and other possibilities; "...instead of casting a foreshadow from the future, it casts a shadow from the side, that is from the other possibilities" (Morson, 1994, p. 118).

Reflexive practice (Cunliffe, 2002, 2003) is caught in the notion of sideshadowing. It works with sideshadowing by seeking to suspend interpretations of beginnings, middles and ends and by working with multiple pasts, multiple presents and multiple futures. Where narratives are taken for granted in reflective practice, they are always questioned and disturbed in reflexive practice.

In addition, reflexivity implies recognizing otherness as opposed to the conservative and self-centered language of narrative. The notion of living story implies an ontological understanding of being as intersubjective and dialogical. We co-construct reality. It follows that storytelling also recognizes otherness because it is from listening to and understanding other voices that we may learn something new about reality.

Benjamin has argued that the "...storyteller is the figure in which the righteous man encounters himself" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 107). Storytelling implies an appreciation of others' speech and actions and thus implies a more democratic and sustainable approach to ethics at the same time as it has big potential for learning by systematically listening to other voices (Boje, 2008c, p. 99).

With the concept of living story and storytelling, we emphasize the openness of human experience and the danger of narrative closure. Derrida makes a sharp distinction between narrative and story. He believes that narrative is linked to the idea of rational progress, objective truth and works with a notion of linear time. He speaks for example of narrative as a demand for truth where it is presumed that phenomena have clear beginnings, middles, ends, borders and boundaries.

As noted, narrative interpretation emphasizes the identification of cause-effect linkages between events. In this way, narrative provides a more or less systematic and structured meta-perspective (plot) in human experience in integrating past, present and future. Narrative creates unity and continuity across time and space – that is across the multiple and complex situations that constitute human life.

Narrative thus reduces the sequence of events into simple linearity. In that process it becomes selective, violent, relatively monological, and thus oppressive of other voices. In turn living story works with an understanding of the complexity of human living, the fragmented character of being and how we are continuously responsive to the activities in which we and other people participate. The dynamics of life always shakes, disturb, disrupt, contradict and may even dissolve narrative order and coherence.

With the term living story, we do not however intend to efface narrative or narrative ethics from the face of the earth. Narrative order is a very important part of being and has been described as a condition of human experience (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 52). Narrative is important part of how we create order in an otherwise chaotic world (Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant, & Yates, 2003). But narrative is only one side of living stories, which are much more complex, multilayered and paradoxical.

The challenge is to understand and see living story webs of relationships and confront established and dominant narratives of ethics. The purpose is to create a more dynamic relationship between ethical standards and living storytelling. The purpose is to wring out ethics from systems to people such that we become more aware of how our stories intertwine with others' stories and where we can regain our senses of responsibility, answerability and complicity in relation to others (Jørgensen et al., 2010)

Next we will discuss how to create this dynamic relationship and we will relate it to ethics in higher education.

ETHICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

We wish to create a more dynamic relationship between narrative and storytelling. Storytelling ethics is a dance between narrative and living stories with the purpose of transforming the ways in which higher education position itself in relation to society.

Potentially, storytelling ethics involves new interpretations, new understandings of otherness and it involves new practices in terms of research policies, decisions, strategies and pedagogical practices. Therefore, storytelling ethics is a strategy for organizational learning in higher education. We refer to storytelling ethics as a kind of critical answerability ethics, since it is concerned with how policies, decisions, strategies and pedagogical practices affect others thereby creating justice and injustice at the same time.

Within the business ethics literature, De George has argued that corporate social responsibility "...deals with responsibilities that either a corporation has to society or responsibilities that society imposes on corporations" (De George, 2008, p. 74). Here the ethical question is reduced to fulfilling the legal and conventional obligations and responsibilities of society. It is in other words an argument for doing nothing else than following the law and other codes of conduct no matter if it is applied in business or in higher education.

In this sense, it is quite distinct from storytelling ethics in that the latter emphasizes the active complicity and responsibility of people in relation to the other whereas De George's position is one in which the definition of responsibility to the other is left to law makers and other regulatory bodies outside of the situation.

Further, De George argues that corporations reflect the society of which they are part; "...corporate social responsibilities,, reflect the expectations and demands of the societies in which the corporations are found and/or where they operate" (De George, 2008, p. 76). The first comment to this argument is once again that it is an argument for doing nothing beyond what is required from you by law or by other codes of conduct. In any case, we still need proof that this is a very effective way of working with ethics and sustainability.

It seems rather, that law and corporate codes and similar informal and formal rules still have some way to go in order to effectively reduce pollution and emission of carbon dioxide, to protect animal and plant species and to reduce poverty and gender inequality as well as securing basic human rights. The financial crisis has made visible frightening examples of how profit has set aside concerns for the other. In other words, we suggest that we supplement law and codes with a more profound ethics whereby responsibility is placed with people and institutions conceived as actors in the world thereby taking an active part in this world.

The second comment to De George's argument is that it doesn't question the notion of society as a unity and thus of speaking with one voice. Schaefer and Kerrigan note for example that organizations align their activities with powerful stakeholders (Schaefer & Kerrigan, 2008, p. 173). Moral responsibilities and demands rely on complex relations of power, which privilege some voices and silence others.

Rasche has argued that ethics continually calls for creative work from organizations to recreate standards of justice in their particular context in the absence of universally just ethical standards (Rasche, 2010). This is the task of storytelling ethics. And the means of this in regard to higher education is to continually call into question the truth and justice claims of narratives by asking critical questions like "how do higher education work?", "which actors, groups etc. are privileged by policies, strategies and actions in higher education?", "what interests and intentions do higher education serve?", and "who are suppressed and marginalized by the policies, strategies and actions in higher education?"

Storytelling ethics thus assumes that higher education is constructed through relations of power that privilege some voices and marginalize others. Storytelling ethics interrogates and inquires into narratives of ethics, justice and responsibility and creates a basis for a more profound reflexivity by delving deeper into living stories and their relations to narrative. Thereby it creates the possibility of moving towards sustainability on a more profound scale.

There are several ways in which storytelling creates a reflexive relationship to narrative voices. Jørgensen & Boje distinguish between two basic dynamics (Jørgensen et al., 2010). First, there is the transition from living story to narrative. This implies exploring the plurality of stories embedded in the emergence of the ways in which higher education position itself in relation to society. This allows for a more nuanced and varied understanding of these practices. Intentions are to subject dominant and morality claims to historical scrutiny and create an alternative memory of the organizational learning process by which these practices emerged (e.g. Jørgensen, 2002, 2007).

In other words, intentions are to turn this process of becoming into a political process where some voices are privileged and heard while others are marginalized and forgotten. As such policies, strategies and actions in higher education are results of alliances, coalitions and interests. They are narratives of power. By critically scrutinizing the circumstances under which these policies, strategies and actions emerged, we gain a different understanding than from the narratives of official language and we thereby gain an alternative memory of the past that might lead to new thoughts on the present and the future (side-shadowing).

The second dynamics is to look at the transition from narrative to living storytelling. It means confronting narrative with what takes place in the here and now. This implies to look at what

happens with ethics in the transition from for example official policy and strategy to ethics in practice where it is being pushed, pulled, negotiated, modified and changed in the interaction between many different actors with differing interests under specific circumstances.

Further it implies becoming aware of how our stories interweave with other stories and still other stories. We thereby create sense of how of joint responsibility, answerability and complicity in the relations to the other and the other others (Boje 2008, p. 97) and how our actions affect others for better and for worse.

Derrida has argued that this responsibility and answerability is without limits (Derrida, 2002). It follows from his point that ethics and politics always involve un-decidability. By this notion he suggests that any situation always involves a degree of not knowing what to do, because it polyphonic, paradoxical and full of tensions (Derrida, 2002, p. 24). The un-decidable refers to the experience that we must speak, while taking account of law, rules, codes of conduct, norms, conventions etc.

We can never account for the justice of a situation or an action even if it has followed specific rules, codes of conduct etc. because these are always expressions of particular relations of power. But as noted by Jones, we must act even if we do violence to others. Speech and actions without violence imply giving nothing to the other (Jones, 2003, p. 233 and p. 239). We do violence and jeopardize justice by acting, because actions imply making priorities and choices, listening to some voices instead of others etc. In this sense storytelling ethics involves gaining a bad conscience of our complicity in the production of injustice (e.g. Derrida, 2002, p. 20).

In other words sustainability in higher education is always sacrificed. The more appropriate question would be how ethical practices in higher education are sustainable and how they jeopardize sustainability at the same time. But even when this is the case, there is always room to do better and therefore we need storytelling ethics to supplement other ethical standards, rules and conventions.

In sum, higher education consists of many different voices that co-exist and interact in many different ways. With storytelling ethics, we wish to create a more democratic, dialogical and dynamic relationship between narrative and living stories with the purpose of transforming the ways in which higher education position itself in relation to society. Storytelling ethics is a profound ethics in which we are compelled to change systems if these systems behave in unacceptable ways. Therefore we have referred to storytelling ethics as a strategy for organizational learning in higher education.

This is potentially a profound strategy with implications on many different levels in higher education. At least it includes considerations in regard to three levels: (1) governance structures, (2) leadership and (3) research and pedagogical practices.

The critical questioning of storytelling in regard governance structures could look like the following: “whose voices are heard in the policies and systems governing higher education”?, “what actions are rewarded”?, “what actions are being punished”?, “how does higher education get funding?”, “from what sources does funding come from?” In short the question is how governance structures promote certain kinds of actions in higher education through the disciplinary effects of rules, systems and performance measures. Further, questions are: “what does sustainability imply

in terms of organizing the relationships that constitute higher education?” and “what changes in governance structures are required to create sustainable governance?”

The critical questions of storytelling in regard to leadership in higher education could look like the following: “whose voices are heard in strategies and decision making of higher education and whose voices are left out?”, “what are the effects of our strategies and policies on society?”, “what is the relationship between strategy and policy (narrative) and the living day-to-day interactions and actions in the organization?”, “how can a more polyphonic strategy be written?” etc. Further, it includes questions like: “what does sustainability imply in terms of how leaders in higher education perceive their role and how do they fulfill this role?”, and “how can leadership practices be developed towards more sustainable leadership?”

The critical questions of storytelling in regard to research and teaching practices are the following: “whose interests does higher education serve in research and how?”, “whose voices are heard in our curricula or in other words what do students learn, why and how?”, “how does research and teaching contribute to society?” etc. Further it includes questions like: “what does sustainability imply in terms of what is being researched and what is being taught including how it is being researched and taught?”, “how do researches/teachers perceive their role and fulfill this role?”, and finally “how can researchers/teachers’ competencies be developed so that research and teaching promotes sustainability?”

CONCLUSIONS

We have developed an ethical approach to reconfigure higher education towards sustainability. We have argued that storytelling ethics is a necessary supplement to narrative ethics by critically questioning ethical standards, policies, strategies and actions in higher education. Storytelling ethics is a creative interplay between narrative and living stories, which can be applied to transform higher education towards sustainability.

As a form of critical answerability ethics, storytelling ethics is thus strategy for organizational learning by which policies, strategies, research and teaching practices may be transformed.

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